

New Greek mutual is an oasis in desert

A THREE-year-old tonnage mutual is turning out to be a small oasis in what is otherwise something of a desert in the Greek marine insurance field.

Despite its pre-eminent position in shipowning, the country has virtually no ship insurance capacity and periodic discussions about establishing a pooled facility in the market have so far produced no concrete result.

Grumbles over the lack of a

"national" alternative when the international marine market hardened in the early 1990s, however, spurred a group of medium-sized shipowners and British brokers to set up the Hellenic Hull Mutual Association (HMA) Ltd.

Registered offshore and reinsuring its risks abroad, the club cannot be said to fulfil the local market's longtime dream of providing Greek marine capacity, but on the other hand,

HMA has made a very promising start.

The association's chairman, shipowner Charalambos Mylonas, admits that the mutual's first steps were overshadowed by "reservations and scepticism towards the quality of cover provided to members".

But last year was seen as a turning point in establishing HMA's credentials.

"Today we are in the plea-

sant position of being accepted by banks and other financial institutions...and it is anticipated that the fleet will continue to grow," said Mr Mylonas.

The club's initial two years have already been closed without the need for additional premiums or supplementary calls, and it is believed that 1996 will follow suit.

By the end of last year membership had grown to 308 vessels of an aggregate of more

than 1.7m gt, while reserves rose to \$12.3m.

HMA requires ships to undergo a condition survey before acceptance, although many applications are said to have been turned down beforehand.

The club's board says softer market conditions will not be allowed to affect its policy regarding member vessels.